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Indigenous Culture and Symbolic Violence.

The notion of ‘symbolic violence’ is normally taken to imply a relationship between the dominant and the dominated. It is also normally taken to imply that a relationship is being described in which victims are non-physically abused or raped. In other words, the term is linguistically value-laden in that it seems to register disapprovingly a situation in which impotent innocence is corrupted by vicious and arbitrary power. The assumption normally is that there is a Rousseauistic nuance to the expression: we are born free but are everywhere enchained by symbolic violence. In short, I think the normal usage of the term ‘symbolic violence’ tacitly acquiesces in a dualistic orientation which, in turn, reinforces a form of Manichaeism, a binary division of good and bad. I think it is important to contest this usage. I shall hope to show that Bourdieu was committed to a pluralistic relationalism. By arguing that the term properly operates in a multi-variate relational context, I shall hope to show that Bourdieu’s analyses, and analyses conducted in accordance with his intentions, transcend some of the embodied oppositions in which we are trapped, particularly in international and pedagogical relations. I hope what I say will also stimulate some discussion about the validity of Bourdieu’s relationalism in his analysis of masculine domination when he was confronted by the, perhaps, absolute, biological dualism of gender relations. In this way, I hope to make a contribution to the attempt to ‘establish a correspondence between the analysis of gender order and that of other forms of exclusion’. It will be clear that I am raising questions which Bourdieu discussed himself brilliantly in the beginning of *La domination masculine* (Bourdieu, 1998), but I want to try to go back to the origins of his thinking. I shall look in some detail at the development of Bourdieu’s thinking related to this topic and, importantly, I shall digress substantially to consider the implications for our interpretation of ‘symbolic violence’ of Bourdieu’s particular philosophy of social science. I should say that I have felt obliged to pursue this exploration in this kind of way because there is currently a tendency in the UK to represent Bourdieu as a ‘post-colonial thinker’¹, one who recognised both the actual and the symbolic violence perpetrated by French colonial forces in Algeria and who documented the suffering of indigenous Algerians. This is to distort Bourdieu’s work. It is to see him as a sociological Frantz Fanon and falsely to reinforce a dualistic vision, or, as Bourdieu would put it, a division between, in this instance, ‘indigenous’ and ‘endogenous’ and between ‘Black skin’ and ‘White masks’².

The reality of Bourdieu’s position is much more complicated and sophisticated. In the interview of 1985 between Bourdieu and Axel Honneth and others, entitled “Fieldwork in Philosophy”, Bourdieu retrospectively argued that in his work in Algeria he had been pursuing an interest in ‘la phénoménologie de la vie affective’ [the phenomenology of affective life] – testing a philosophical position empirically or, more accurately, recognising that phenomenology, as developed by the late Husserl, logically entailed continuous empirical enquiry. The consequence of Bourdieu’s phenomenological orientation was that he sought to apprehend phenomena in a presuppositionless manner or to ensure that his attempt to comprehend phenomena operated with conceptual categories which did not abuse their pre-existing, objectified, categorical characteristics. On the first page of his first book – *Sociologie de l’Algérie*, (Bourdieu, 1958) – Bourdieu confronted the problem of how he should attempt to describe social relations within a unit which was only in the process of becoming politically

¹ See a forthcoming number of the *Sociological Review* devoted to ‘Post-colonial Bourdieu’.

² Note Bourdieu’s comment; “But above all I wanted to get away from speculation – at that time, the works of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*, were the latest fashion, and they struck me as being both false and dangerous”. (Bourdieu, 1990, 7).

existent. He was conscious that he was attempting to describe culturally plural societies or communities subsisting in physically different conditions and isolated geographically and linguistically – Berbers, Arabophones, the Kabyles, the Shawia, and the Mozabites – in terms of a political identity – Algeria – which was itself a colonial construct:

“It is obvious that Algeria, when considered in isolation from the rest of the Maghreb, does not constitute a true cultural unit. However, I have limited my investigation to Algeria for a definite reason. Algeria is specifically the object of this study because the clash between the indigenous and the European civilizations has made itself felt here with the greatest force. Thus the problem under investigation has determined the choice of subject.” (Bourdieu, 1958, 5; 1962a, xi)

Long before he had articulated the notion of ‘symbolic violence’, Bourdieu was aware of the dangers of nominalism, of himself analytically perpetrating symbolic violence by reinforcing the conceptual categories of French political administration, abusing the intrinsic diversity of a situation which had to construct its own nationhood. Bourdieu was caught in an objectively dualist condition in that he was an endogenous observer of indigenous cultures, writing an account of ‘Algeria’ for the Presses Universitaires de France and a reading public of metropolitan France. His dilemma was that he wanted both to establish his own credentials in terms of Western European intellectual traditions and also write within the Algerian situation as what he would subsequently call a ‘participant objectifier’, situating himself within what he was observing in such a way that his analyses might contribute to the latent process of Algerian self-definition. Unfortunately, the dominant discourse within which to communicate his perceptions within the French tradition at the time was Lévi-Straussian social anthropology. To satisfy the expectations of this discourse, Bourdieu modified *Sociologie de l’Algérie* in its second edition (Bourdieu, 1961) to offer the kinds of binary diagrammatic analyses fashionable at the time – following the dualisms of Lévi-Strauss’s ‘cooked’ and ‘raw’. To satisfy his participatory inclinations, by contrast, Bourdieu became involved in the statistical and ethnographic research which led to the publication, in two volumes, of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. (Bourdieu, 1963). Methodologically, Bourdieu’s intention was to observe phenomenologically the process of acculturation of Algerian tribespeople from traditional to modern social organisation, from rural to urban living. Following the precedents of American acculturationists, like Melville Herskovits³, Bourdieu represented the *status quo ante* of tribal social organisation in *Sociologie de l’Algérie* as a base-line against which to measure the cultural adaptation of the immigrants to Algiers whom he and his team of Algerian researchers interviewed for *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. In terms of the analysis of affective adaptation, Bourdieu focussed, in Part II of the book, on the experiences of Algerian people who had forcibly migrated to Algiers, but the statistical analysis of Part I takes as its object the totality of Algerian society, providing information on Algerians and colons alike – population figures, details of employment across communities. As Bourdieu recollected again in 1985:

“I left for Algeria while I was in the army. After two hard years during which it was not possible to do anything, I devoted myself to fieldwork. I began by writing a book with the purpose of casting light on the drama of the Algerian people and also on the colonists, whose situation was no less dramatic, beyond their racism.” (Bourdieu, 1986b, 38).⁴

³ For a fuller discussion of this influence on Bourdieu, see Robbins, D.M. (2007a)

⁴ This passage is in the English translation (Bourdieu, 1986c) of the German text of the interview (Bourdieu, P., 1986b). The passage does not appear in the French version of the interview published in *Choses dites* (Bourdieu, 1987), nor in the English translation of the French text (Bourdieu, 1990). It is cited by Yacine, 2004.

In the period between 1958 and 1963, I am suggesting that Bourdieu's work was trapped within three different kinds of dualistic framework. First there was the dualism of his own situation as a colonial ethnologist observing the social behaviour of Algerians. We could call this his *situational dualism*. Second, there was the dualism of the dominant structuralist discourse in which he sought to transmit his ethnographic findings. We could call this his *discursive dualism*. Third, there was the temporal dualism implicit in the acculturation model, the assumption that the phenomenon to be measured was the real, temporal accultural adaptation of people living in Algeria, the assumption, in other words, that we can identify, isolate, or retrieve knowledge of prior states of being so as to analyse the process of adjustment to new states. We could call this the *accultural dualism*.

To embark on my short philosophical digression, I want to argue that Bourdieu's philosophical training had made him particularly sensitive to the problems inherent in these dualisms. We know that Bourdieu produced, under the supervision of Henri Gouhier for a *diplôme d'études supérieures* in 1954, a dissertation which was a translation of, and a critical commentary on, Leibniz's *Animadversiones in Partem Generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum*. Unfortunately, it seems likely that no copy of this study is extant and we can, therefore, only speculate about the nature of its content in relation to the development of Bourdieu's thinking. Speculation is helped by Bourdieu's recollection, in the "Fieldwork in Philosophy" interview of 1985 already quoted, that, whilst at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, he had followed the classes of, amongst other philosophers of science, Martial Guérout, at the Collège de France. In his *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*, Bourdieu especially highlighted (Bourdieu, 2004, 21) Guérout's *Dynamique et métaphysique leibniziennes* of 1935 as one of the two great works – the other being Vuillemin's *Physique et métaphysique kantienne* of 1955 (Vuillemin, 1955) – which enabled him to resist the influence of existentialism. Guérout's text was written quite specifically to reopen discussion of the relationship between dynamics and metaphysics, or, more generally, between science and philosophy in the work of Leibniz. The classical thesis had been that Leibniz's philosophy followed exclusively from his science whereas the scholarship of the first decade of the 20th century, notably that of Russell in his *The Philosophy of Leibniz* (Russell, 1900), translated into French in 1908 (Russell, 1908), and that of Couturat's *La Logique de Leibniz* of 1902 (Couturat, 1902), had argued the reverse, that Leibniz's metaphysics had followed completely from his logic and, above all, from his mathematical research. Guérout's text followed in detail the development of Leibniz's philosophy of science. In his earliest works, of the 1670s, Leibniz opposed modern physicists like Galileo and Wren who supposed that laws of motion could be deduced from the simple observation of the movement of bodies. For early Leibniz, abstract, *a priori* laws of motion make possible the understanding of sensible movements. Although he was inclined to oppose crude empiricism, he nevertheless realised that there often appeared to be a disparity between the laws of abstract and concrete physics. As Guérout puts it, Leibniz tried to overcome this disparity by arguing that 'to pass from abstract laws to the concrete world, we have to suppose the intervention of the wisdom of God who creates an economy in the world such that the proximate effects of abstract laws are modified by their distant effects, so much so that there result entirely different real effects which are sensible phenomena' (Guérout, 1935, 12-3). This hypothesis enabled Leibniz to advocate the discovery of the causes of current phenomena by regarding them as distant enactments of their abstract origins. However, Guérout shows that this conception did not enable Leibniz to understand the conservation of motion in the world and he was led to posit not just a principle of prime movement but, rather, a principle of ongoing participatory motion. As Guérout summarises:

"Spirit is conceived of as the condition of the movement of which it constitutes the essence, and God is no longer the prime but rather the formal cause of universal

harmony. Metaphysics does not relate us simply to a substratum situated behind the phenomenal world which its laws are responsible for establishing but, rather it mingles with pure science for the latter cannot alone explain a phenomenon which seems at every moment to be conditioned by the action of spiritual power. Left to its own resources, mechanism is incapable of supplying the principle ... without which the positive element of nature would not know either how to diminish or increase.” (Guérout, 1935, 17, *my translation*).

However, the consequence of Leibniz’s transposition of God from abstract, metaphysical prime mover of the material world to immanent spiritual presence in the physical world had the effect of liberating a vitalist, non-mechanical physics from metaphysics. To re-establish the unity of metaphysics and physics following this dissociation, Guérout suggests that there were two possible ways of thinking available to philosophers. The first, he claims, was the way to be taken by Kant in his *Attempt to introduce the concept of Negative Magnitudes into philosophy* (*Versuch den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*) of 1763 (Kant, 1992, 203-241)) whereby the opposition of forces in the physical world are taken to be the basis for re-thinking philosophy, whereas the second was the way taken by Leibniz in his mature philosophy of basing physical opposition in the purely rational.

There is no time to do justice to Guérout’s discussion of the complexity of the relationship between the development of the thought of Leibniz and that of Descartes and the Cartesians as well as of Galileo, Huyghens, and Newton. There are two important points to make. The first is that Leibniz rejected the empiricism of his contemporaries, but also rejected the Cartesian separation of mind and body, of thought from extended matter. Leibniz struggled to advance the idea of an immanent, participatory logic involved in suffusing physical and metaphysical explanation as well as suffusing physical and metaphysical forces. For Leibniz there were separable truths of reason and truths of fact, but the two constantly inter-related. The second point is that Guérout’s text on several occasions explicitly cites Leibniz’s *Animadversiones* in evidence that Leibniz, by the time that it was written in 1692, had articulated clearly his view of the inadequacies of Cartesianism. Equally, Guérout on several occasions compares the solution adopted by Leibniz with the one which was to be adopted by Kant in his essay on *Negative Magnitudes*. Tacitly, Guérout seems to be attempting to retrieve Leibniz’s philosophical solution from the neo-Kantian interpretation of both Leibniz and Kant offered by Ernst Cassirer. Both of these points of reference in Guérout suggest to me that Bourdieu’s early thought about philosophy and the social sciences could not fail to have been informed by the pre-Kantian and Kantian arguments in respect of the relationship between logic and scientific explanation. This direct influence is confirmed by the explicit reference in the conclusion to *Les Héritiers* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964b, 104-5) to an analogy between the measurement of educational achievement and the Kantian assessment of moral behaviour which, for Kant, was a relational assessment based upon the relevance for philosophy of expressing differences of motivation in terms of counterposing negative and positive magnitudes of force rather than in terms of negativity defined logically as contradiction. For Bourdieu and Passeron, the logic of contradiction imposed a dualistic, pass/fail attitude to educational achievement whereas a differently based logic carried the possibility of acknowledging relationally degrees of performance and of recognizing the worth of overcoming handicap rather than the attainment of absolute standards.

In the final section of this paper, I want to try to highlight the extent to which, grounded in this familiarity with 17th and 18th century debates in the philosophy of science, Bourdieu’s work manifests an exploration of the implications of the same issues for social science. We have to constantly show that his work was not dualistic and, importantly for our relation to his work

since his death, we have to avoid relating dualistically to reifications of his concepts. In other words, I want to insist on the multi-variate relationalism of his work and the need for a multi-variate relationalism in our response to that work. Methodologically, Bourdieu's work of the 1960s was already committed to the view that the 'findings' of research should contain within themselves a presentation of the logic of their derivation⁵. As early as *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* Bourdieu wrestled with the difficulty of representing discursively situations of multiple difference. The text was in two parts, the first of which was a statistical analysis of Algerian society, and the second of which discussed issues, such as changing attitudes to work, based on conversations undertaken during an ethnographic study. Some of these conversations were offered as transcripts in appendices and Bourdieu also wrote an introductory section to Part I which he called "Statistics and Sociology". This introduction advocated a procedural dialectic between statistical and ethnographic analysis and the full text embodied this dialectic in the relationship between the parts. As such, therefore, the emphasis of dialectic remained a form of discursive dualism. The same could be said of the form of Bourdieu's early article on his home region of Béarn: "Célibat et condition paysanne" (1962b) as well as of the form of the relationship between the transmission of his early educational research first as a working paper of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne entitled "Les étudiants et leurs études" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964a) and secondly in the publication, *Les Héritiers* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964b). The combined presentation tried to articulate the dialectical reciprocity between data and interpretation. The same could also be said about *La reproduction* of 1970 (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). The problem was explicitly addressed from the first sentence of the Foreword to the first French edition. Bourdieu and Passeron wrote:

"The arrangement of this work in two books, at first sight very dissimilar in their mode of presentation, should not suggest the common conception of the division of intellectual labour between the piecemeal tasks of empirical inquiry and a self-sufficient theoretical activity." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, ix)

It was all very well to make this initial assertion but, of course, the logical propositions have subsequently been extrapolated from the dialectical context of their production. For our purposes, this is importantly the case in relation to the set of propositions with which the text begins which relate to the notion of 'symbolic violence'. The first proposition under the heading of 'The Twofold arbitrariness of pedagogic action' reads:

"All pedagogic action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 5)

The problem here is that the very act of presenting this as a universal proposition both loses the immanence of its production in practice and also reduces the multiplicity of the relations of fact to the duality of a logical confrontation between a singular power and an implied singular victim – the imposition of *a* cultural arbitrary by *an* arbitrary power rather than the impositions of cultural arbitrariness by arbitrary powers. Formally and substantively, the book lay itself open to dualistic reception. The same difficulty was there in Bourdieu's article of 1966 entitled "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur" (Bourdieu, 1966a). In discussing the productivity of creative artists in terms of a network of 'field' relations and of inter-acting forces rather than in terms of authorial self-expressive intent, Bourdieu was deploying the language of physics to apply to human relations. The content of his argument was that artists can be located pluralistically in a continuum of positions which express diverging relations between writers and their publics, but the title conveyed the impression that the article was an elaboration of a dichotomous relationship between authors and fields. The fact that the article first appeared in a number of

⁵ For a more detailed discussion, see Robbins, D.M. (2007b)

Les Temps Modernes devoted to the 'Problems of Structuralism' gave rise to the interpretation of Bourdieu as a 'post-structuralist', someone who analytically sought to convey the performance of agents in constructing the structures within which they operated as opposed to offering detached structural analysis. So was born the persistent dualism of the so-called 'structure/agency' debate.

Only gradually in his career did Bourdieu overcome this tyranny of dualism. Experientially, he confronted his *situational dualism*. Immediately after his return from Algeria, he embarked on his analysis of his home region. This was an attempt to explore the relationship between 'insider' and outsider' and 'subjective' and 'objective' within his indigenous context rather than within a context which was objectively pre-defined dualistically in terms of 'coloniser' and 'colonised'. A similar point could be made about his educational research of the 1960s. The analyses leading to *Les Héritiers* were of students of Philosophy and Sociology and of provincial students studying in central universities – deliberate objective case-studies of his own career trajectory in transition from Philosophy to Sociology and from the provinces to Paris. Whereas Bourdieu initially liked to see himself as a provincial person who was not at ease in Parisian society, he began to embrace his multiple identity, discarding spatial duality and accommodating a relationalism which enabled him to begin to see himself as a citizen of the world. Much of his work of the 1990s relates to a comparable tension between his sense of French nationalism and his interest in developing internationalism. The difficulty was to avoid dualistic, national antagonisms so as to recommend a properly relational analysis of international relations. The late article which Bourdieu co-authored with Loïc Wacquant – "Les ruses de la raison impérialiste" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999) - is an interesting case in point. Much of the article comes across as aggressively anti-American, but Bourdieu made an introductory footnote in which he insisted:

"It bears stressing at the outset to avoid any misunderstanding – and to ward off the predictable accusation of 'anti-Americanism' – that nothing is more universal than the pretension to the universal or, more accurately, to the universalization of a particular vision of the world; and that the demonstration sketched here would hold *mutatis mutandis*, for other fields and other countries (notably for France ...)" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, 52)

and in which he proceeded to refer to his earlier article, entitled "Deux impérialismes de l'universel" (Bourdieu, 1992) in which he had analysed the conceptual imperialism involved in the international transmission of the ideology of the French Revolution. During the 1990s, Bourdieu specifically emphasized his place within a peculiarly French intellectual tradition and focused increasingly on involvement in French politics, but he always insisted that it was a characteristic of French particularity to aspire towards internationally dominating social explanation and that this was a characteristic which had to be understood relationally as such.

This same late text, in its content, was also an attack on *discursive dualism*. The focus of the article is on the way in which North American analyses of Latin American race relations had imposed a dualistic Black/White categorisation which failed to register the complexity of Hispanic culture. It has to be said that in rhetorically exposing this inadequacy of North American inspired race relations analysis, suggesting that dualistic analysis was itself a form of symbolic violence, Bourdieu and Wacquant tended to reinforce dualism by presenting American research as dualistically exercising domination over indigenous Latin American culture. The confrontation between research and reality should logically have been presented relationally.

I can only sketch the way in which the progression of the concept of *habitus* was an attempt on Bourdieu's part to escape from the framework of *dualistic acculturation* in which it had been first developed. In the early texts, the concept of *habitus* clearly served the function of

mediating between dualistic orientations. The implicit argument of the early educational research was that educational performance could not satisfactorily be explained by a static correlation between student achievement and class background. The concept of *habitus* mediated initially between the poles of mechanism and finalism and sought to find a way of indicating that educational achievement was not a reflection of a static disparity between working class culture and the culture of the socially dominant but, rather, a factor in an ongoing relationalism over time in which the attitudes of the participants were instrumental in affecting their own life-chances. It was only gradually that Bourdieu managed to communicate multi-dimensionality outside a dualistic framework. One of the achievements of *La distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986a) is that it tries to represent the function of taste in an immanent process of participatory position-taking which is captured statically but in which future trajectories are shown to be latent. As social attitudes changed, Bourdieu knew that the concept of *habitus* had first functioned in a context in which the influence of the family in producing inter-generational attitude change had still been potent. It was assumed that individuals inherited prior family values and lived their lives by adjusting their personal aspirations in relation to this inheritance. The position-taking which was at first perceived dualistically because, socially, it still was dualistic gradually shifted in Bourdieu's thought towards a more thoroughly relational view of the world in which individuals inter-act in their own terms, like the monads or entelechies of Leibniz.

I would like to trace the way in which Bourdieu's analytical work adjusted reciprocally in relation to social change. I think that he gradually found a way to represent relationalism during the 1970s. There are many early articles in which Bourdieu wrestled with the relationship between the logic of division in the process of perception and the actuality of division in observed phenomena. Many titles are indicative, focusing on difference and distinction, class and classification and categorisation. I can just refer you to these: "Différences et distinctions" (Bourdieu, 1966b); "Condition de classe et position de classe" (Bourdieu, 1966c); "Champ du pouvoir, champ intellectuel et habitus de classe" (Bourdieu, 1971a); "Classes et classement" (Bourdieu, 1973); "Avenir de classe et causalité du probable" (Bourdieu, 1974a); "Les fractions de la classe dominante et les modes d'appropriation des oeuvres d'art" (Bourdieu, 1974b); "Les catégories de l'entendement professoral" (Bourdieu, 1975); "Les modes de domination" (Bourdieu, 1976a); "La production de l'idéologie dominante" (Bourdieu, 1976b); "Une classe objet" (Bourdieu, 1977); "Classement, déclassement, reclassement" (Bourdieu, 1978). These all repay attention in the terms which I have tried to set out, as examples of attempts to avoid the consequences of a dualistic representation of multiple reality, but I want to finish by referring to one little-known article which focused briefly and quite specifically on the issue which I have wanted to highlight. It was an article which was published in English in 1971 in the Times Literary Supplement. As far as I know it was never published in French and, according to the Bibliography of Bourdieu's work produced by Yvette Delsaut and Marie-Christine Rivière, it has only been translated into Japanese (in 1986) (Delsaut & Rivière, 2002, 28). It was called "The Thinkable and the Unthinkable". It begins by characterising 'two diametrically opposed positions' in theories of culture, the structuralist and the functionalist, but it moves quickly to a discussion of the powerful effects of dualistic thinking. Bourdieu wrote:

"Since symbolic systems derive their structures from the systematic application of one single *principium divisionis* and can organize our representation of the natural and social world only by dividing it up into antagonistic classes; since they provide both meaning and a consensus on meaning by way of the logic of inclusion and exclusion, they are predisposed by their very structure to fulfil the simultaneous functions of inclusion and exclusion, association and dissociation, integration and distinction. Only in so far as it has as its logical and gnosiological function to order the world and to establish

agreement about the world does the ruling culture fulfil its ideological – that is, political – function of legitimizing an arbitrary order; more accurately, it is because, as a structured structure, it reproduces in transfigured and therefore unrecognizable form, the structure of prevalent socio-economic relationships that as a structuring structure – and therefore as a *problématique* – it produces a representation of the social world immediately adjusted to the structure of socio-economic relationships, which are consequently perceived as natural, so contributing to the symbolic buttressing of the existing balance of forces.

In short, culture classifies – and classifies the classifiers.” (Bourdieu, 1971a, 1255)

For me, this beautifully expresses Bourdieu’s anguish about the tyranny of dualistic analysis. He knew that he had to counter-act dualism both in the content and the form of his work so as to avoid allowing his analysis of symbolic violence to become itself a form of symbolic violence. We have to preserve Bourdieu’s vigilant sensitivity in our work and in our use of his work for our purposes.

One way to summarise my argument is to suggest that I have shown that Bourdieu did not cease to ‘be a philosopher’ after his training at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and become a ‘sociologist’ in the 1960s. Rather the progression of his philosophical thinking logically entailed sociological solutions to epistemological problems. My contention is that we can deploy Bourdieu’s work in our own research as long as we recognise that his thinking was relational and that the heuristic concepts which he developed – such as ‘symbolic violence’ – were interventions which related dialectically with the objective social conditions of his experience. We have to respond relationally, testing whether the use of his concepts involves the resuscitation of their philosophical origins or their pragmatic deployment on the grounds that his sociological practice successfully exorcised those origins. The trap to be avoided is perhaps best illustrated by a brief comparison between the work of Bourdieu and Lyotard. I have no evidence to suggest that Bourdieu knew or used Lyotard’s early introduction to Phenomenology (Lyotard, 1954), but it has always seemed to me that Lyotard’s discussion of ‘Phenomenology and the Human Sciences’ throws light on the way in which Bourdieu’s reading of Husserl influenced the development of his sociological thinking. Lyotard argued that

“... phenomenology was led inevitably, by the very fact that it is not a metaphysics but a philosophy of the concrete, to take hold of sociological data in order to clarify itself, and equally to put into question the procedures by which sociologists obtain this data, in order to clarify sociology”. (Lyotard, 1991, 75)

This sentence provides the rationale both for Bourdieu’s description of his ethnographic work in Algeria as ‘Fieldwork in Philosophy’ (the title, in English, given in the French publication, in *Choses dites* [Bourdieu, 1987] of the interview with Honneth, Kocyba, and Schwibs) and for the development of his ‘reflexive’ sociology. Bourdieu and Lyotard were similarly influenced by Husserl, but the important distinction is that Bourdieu positioned himself within the discourse of sociology whereas Lyotard positioned himself within the discourse of philosophy. Much of Lyotard’s discussion in *Le Différend* (Lyotard, 1983) could be said to relate to the phenomenon of linguistic symbolic violence, and it is no accident that most of the contents of Bourdieu’s *Ce que parler veut dire* (Bourdieu, 1982) were included in an English text which was given the title *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu, 1991) which Bourdieu adopted when the original French version was reissued in 2001 (Bourdieu, 2001). In the opening paragraph of *Le Différend*, Lyotard states that a ‘differend’ “would be a conflictual case between two parties (at

least) which could not be resolved equitably in the absence of a judgemental rule applicable to the two arguments” (Lyotard, 1983, 9). He concludes the paragraph by commenting that

“The title of the book suggests (through the generic use of the article) that a universal rule of judgement between heterogeneous genres is generally lacking.” (Lyotard, 1983, 9).

Lyotard’s book offers a philosophical discussion of judgemental incommensurability, conducted in a way which still operates with the spectre of communicative dualism as well as in relation to autonomous discourse. The first sentence betrays the assumption that conflictual cases are bipartisan rather than multiple and betrays Lyotard’s disinclination to analyse communication sociologically. By contrast, Bourdieu moved away from a dualistic representation of symbolic violence towards a recognition of multivariate factors operating in exchanges of power, all of which have to be understood sociologically.

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